

If any one should object to this method of writing, as the author is informed some supercilious weak people have done, he begs they would consider that it was, as Mr. *Addison* observes, the first species of wit that made its appearance in the world, and has been highly valued, not only in times of the greatest simplicity, but also among the most polite and refined ages of mankind. We find, even in the holy scriptures, this sort of instruction and admonition apply'd; when plain reasoning or the downright truth would not perhaps have been so safe or so effectual. *Jotham's* parable of the trees in the ninth chapter of *Judges* is of this kind, as is also that of *Nathan's* poor man and his lamb, which conveyed instruction to the ear of a king without offending it, and brought *David* to a proper sense of his guilt and of his duty. We find *Aesop* reading lectures of this sort in the most distant ages of *Greece*; and in the very beginning of the *Roman* common-wealth,

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wealth, we see a mutiny among the people appeased by a fable of the belly and the limbs; which gained the attention of that incensed rabble, when perhaps they would have torn to pieces any man who had preached the same doctrine to them in an open and direct manner.

As fables took their birth in the very infancy of learning, they never flourished more than when learning was at its greatest height. To justify this assertion, I shall put my reader in mind of *Horace*, the greatest wit and critic in the *Augustan* age; and of *Boileau*, the most correct poet among the moderns; not to mention *la Fontaine*, who by this way of writing, is come more into vogue than any other author of our times.

Reading, (says Mr. *Addison*, in another place) is to the mind, what exercise is to the body: as by the one, health is preserved, strengthened and invigorated; by the other, virtue (which is the health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed.

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